№ 14.

The Danger of Hypocriſie.

A SERMON

Preached at

GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL,

Auguſt 3^d. 1673.

Assheton W K

By *William Aſheton*, B. D. Domeſtick Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of *Ormond*.

LONDON,

Printed for *R. Royſton*, Bookſeller to His moſt Sacred Majeſty. 1673.

Printed for R. Royston, Bookseller to His most
Sacred Majesty. 1673.

TO

The Right Honourable

Sr. ROBERT HANSON,

LORD MAYOR

Of the City of

LONDON,

AND THE

Honourable Court of Aldermen.

Right Honourable,

I AM *so far from being guilty of any trifling* Apologies (*the usual Embellishments of these* Dedicatory Epistles) *that, quite contrary to common expectation, I have thought fit, in my own defence, to give this Assurance; That the following Discourse is, if not*

Pertinent, *at least* Seasonable; *and* (*had not their* prejudices *prevented*) *might have been as profitable to others, as to my great encouragement I find, it is acceptable to your* Honour, *who by your Command to publish it, have made it* yours.

Had some men, who have no mean thoughts of themselves, been my Judges *herein, they would sooner have sent it to the* Fire *than to the* Press. *For to deal ingeniously, as will appear upon its perusal, it is not calculated for their* Meridian.

I have neither blaz'on'd the priviledges of the Saints, *nor enlarg'd any other of their darling* Doctrines. *Nor indeed* (*that I may freely declare my Opinion*) *have I any great kindness for them; unless it be for this* one, *wherein, I confess, I am their perfect* Convert. *'Tis their*

Doctrine

Doctrine of Perseverance. *That is, such* Saints *as the World hath hitherto found them (and I have not now judg'd it suitable to give you their* Character) *such they resolve still to continue. And thus far, upon good Grounds, I am very apt to believe them.*

For when men are once grown to this height of Confidence (this is a real Truth, but it will not please them) *to boast of it as their* Glory, *to* head *and* hold up *a* Party; *when they shall study ways how to* evade, *where they are called to* obey, *and are resolv'd to* erre, *because they have* err'd, *and to hold the* Conclusion *in despite of all* Premises; *when they are angry with all those that shall endeavour, though by the* mildest Methods, *to reform them; the utmost that can be said is this;* Great is Diana of the Ephesians; *'Tis their Interest*

to

to have it so; the cry runs on, and who can help it?

Were it pertinent to detain your Lordship *with such Expostulations, I would then express my trouble, that any one should so far mistake my Discourse* (*and* there were some that did so, *for they had not the Patience to hear it*) *as to interpret any thing by me then deliver'd, either as a discouragement of* Preaching, *or an encouragement of its* Opposers.

As I am sure such a Gloss *was beyond my* Intention (*and certainly I should best know my own meaning*) *so I dare be confident, if my* Accusers *will but allow my words such a favourable* Interpretation, *as the composures of men do usually challenge: That is, Let them but consider my Discourse as a* Totum complexum; *give every Sentence*

tence its due connexion and dependence with the preceeding and ſubſequent matter, and they will then confeſs; That had their hearts been as innocent as my Sermon, *there had been no cauſe to have troubled, either Them or my Self with this preſent Vindication.*

The God of Heaven grant them humble Hearts, and governable Spirits, is the conſtant Prayer of

Your Honour's moſt

humble Servant,

WILLIAM ASHETON.

DEDICATORY.

tence its due connexion and dependence with the preceeding and subsequent matter, and they will then confess; That had their hearts been as innocent as my Sermon, there had been no cause to have troubled, either Them or my Self with this present Vindication.

The God of Heaven grant them humble Hearts, and governable Spirits, is the constant Prayer of

Your Honour's most

humble Servant,

WILLIAM ASHETON.

The Danger of Hypocrisie.

A SERMON

Preached at

GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL,

August 3^d. 1673.

MATTHEW VII. XXI.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.

THERE are two extreams in the Church of God have been ever fatal to *Religion*, and destructive to the power of *Godliness*: they are *Hypocrisie* and *Prophaneness*.

Prophaneness is indeed more visible and notorious, but *Hypocrisie* is more dangerous. Our Blessed Saviour (who certainly best knew how to judge in the Case) hath thus determin'd it to our hands. For, in 21. of S. *Matth.* at 31. *verse*, speaking of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, the Rulers of the People; those great Professors of their Age: *Verily*, saith he, *I say unto you, the Publicans and Harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you.* The Reason of which Sentence seems to be this: Because *Conviction*, that necessary either preparatory to, or part of *Conversion*, is more easily wrought in these latter than the former. For, tell a man that is notoriously prophane, of his idle, graceless, debauched courses; and the *Law* of God is so express against him; the *world* takes such notice of these things; his own awakened *Conscience* (maugre all his Charms to quiet and appease it) doth so smite and buffet him, that if he hath any shame and ingenuity left in him, he is forc'd to subscribe the Charge and confess the Indictment.

But now the *Hypocrite*, such is the nature of his sin, is not so easily converted, because not so easily convinc'd. For when the *Preacher* hath

employ'd

employ'd the best Rhetorick he can; first, to aggravate his sin and guilt, and then to direct him by what ways and means he may avoid the snare; either this *Discourse* is beating of the Air; a mere empty Harangue, which as to any particular Application belongs to no man: or else, if the guiltiest wretch in a whole Congregation, should but fancy, that our Reproofs were directed against him in special; could I open his breast, and display his tumultuous Thoughts unto the world, I could then, but not till then, discover his entertainment of such *Doctrine*.

The truth is, and it is a sad Truth, men can endure plain dealing in any thing rather than in matters of *Salvation*, where it is certainly most needful. But we who are the *Ambassadors* of our dear Lord and Master, must not be partial or unfaithful in our Duty, for the pleasure or displeasure of any mortal Creature. If mens confident hopes shall encourage them to cry *Peace, Peace*, when the Scripture tells us there is no Peace, but sudden Destruction: must we then *sow Pillows under mens Elbows*? and betray the Truth by a cowardly *silence*? No; but we must then blow the Trumpet and

warn them of the approaching Danger; and if they will not regard us, if they will not repent; their Blood be upon their own heads, we have given them warning, we have delivered our own Souls.

There are ſeveral men amongſt us, but with what warrant I know not, that beſtow upon themſelves, by way of difference, the Titles of *Profeſſors*, the *Godly party*, the *Praying people*, and the like: as if none but they were fit to be own'd either as *Profeſſors*, as *Saints*, or as *Godly men*. Of what ill Conſequence, as to the Church of God, the appropriating of theſe diſtinctive Titles (that ſound ſo like the *Phariſees*, *I am holier than thou*, and warp ſo much towards a ſeparation) may prove; 'tis no part of my buſineſs at preſent to enquire. Only I muſt deſire them, (and I do it in compaſſion to their poor immortal Souls) to take good care that their hearts be right in the ſight of God in this matter. The *Devil*, ſo he may but deceive them, will eaſily *transform himſelf into an Angel of Light*. That they are a *Praying people*, that they are frequenters of *Sermons*, we are ſo far from diſliking, that we tell them 'tis but their *Duty*, and commend them for it. But

we

we must withall remind them; That there is something else to be done besides *Preaching* and *Praying*; even the great things of the *Law*, the Duties not only of the *First*, but also of the *Second* Table; which if they must neither be preached up by us, nor practis'd by them, lest thereby we should too much exalt a *Moral state*; I must tell them, and I do it with some dread upon my Spirits, we may come to roar in *Hell* for not being Moral men. *Not every one*, &c.

For the Explication of the words I must shew,

First, What it is to say *Lord, Lord.*

Secondly, What, to *do the Will of his Father that is in Heaven.*

To say *Lord, Lord*, it is to make an *outward Profession*, by performing external acts of Worship, that we are *Christians*; that we believe in *Jesus Christ*; that we acknowledge him for our *Lord*, and look for Salvation by him.

That this may appear more plain and intelligible, I must remind you, that there is a two-fold *Worship*; or, to speak more properly, the name of *Worship* is consider'd two several ways.

1. There is *Internal* Worship, which denotes the exercise of those inward Graces whereby

whereby the Soul doth ſhew its dependence upon and Relation unto God, as *Faith*, *Hope*, *Love*, *Patience*, &c.

2. There is *External* Worſhip, which comprehends ſuch outward actions, whereby the inward Piety and Devotion of the Soul, in the exerciſe of the forementionꝺ Graces, is expreſs'd and cheriſh'd; as *Prayer*, *hearing of Sermons*, *Receiving the Sacraments*, and ſuch outward Duties, which are the Marks and Characters of a viſible Church, and whereby ſhe is diſtinguiſh'd from all civil Societies. So that the full meaning of this firſt Clauſe is this, *Not every one that ſaith*, &c. Not every one that is a Member of the viſible Church. Not every one that is a Profeſſor of Religion. Not every one that can Preach or Pray or hear Sermons, *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: No; there is ſomething more to be done: and what that is, the latter part of my Text informs you. *But he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.*

By the *Doing of his Fathers Will*, is meant the Doing of thoſe Duties of Obedience, which his Father hath commanded in his Law, particularly the Decalogue. Which our Bleſſed Saviour

Saviour is ſo far from deſtroying, that he tells us expreſly, he came to fulfil it. Not by the Addition of any new Precept; the *Socinian* conceit. Nor by taking off its Obligation as to the Perſon of a Believer, the *Antinomian* fancy. But *Firſt*, By fulfilling it in his own Perſon, *thus it behoveth us to fulfil all Righteouſneſs.*

2. By a particular explication and wiping off the falſe Gloſſes of the *Phariſees* and other *Jewiſh* Doctors.

3. By adding new and more ſpiritual Motives of Obedience to its former Obligations.

The words thus explain'd do afford us this Obſervation, which I intend the ſubject of my preſent Diſcourſe.

An outward Profeſſion of Religion, without Obedience and amendment of Life, is not ſufficient to bring us to Heaven. *Obſerv.*

I ſhall give you theſe *two* Reaſons for it.

Firſt, An outward Profeſſion may be found in Hypocrites and Caſt-aways, ſuch men as ſhall never come to Heaven. *R.* 1.

Secondly, An outward Profeſſion of Religion without Obedience and amendment of life, is diſpleaſing and abominable in the ſight of God, and therefore, I argue *à fortiori*, 'tis not ſufficient to bring us to Heaven. *R.* 2. The

The former Reaſon, when put into Logick, runs thus.

That which may be found in Hypocrites and Caſt-aways, ſuch men as ſhall never come to Heaven, is not ſufficient to bring us to Heaven: But an outward Profeſſion of Religion without Obedience and amendment of life, may be found in Hypocrites and Caſt-aways, ſuch men as ſhall never come to Heaven.

Therefore 'tis not ſufficient to bring us to Heaven.

The *Major* Propoſition ſtands upon this foundation.

That which gives us a *Right* and *Title* to Heaven, muſt be ſomething proper to the *called* and *choſen* of God, ſomething peculiar to his peculiar People. Hence 'tis, that in Scripture we read of the *faith of Gods Elect*: and amongſt our Divines that we hear ſo often of theſe Diſtinctions; *Common* and *ſpecial* Grace; *Gratia gratis data*, and *gratia gratum faciens*; The Graces of *Illumination*, and *Sanctification*. The which latter being wrought by the bleſſed and powerful operation of the *Holy Spirit of God*, after a moſt effectual but unconceivable manner, regenerating and renewing, ſeaſoning and ſanctify-

ſanctifying the hearts of his Choſen; though Hypocriſie may make ſuch a ſemblance, as that we, who are oblig'd to the judgment of Charity, may have probable inducements to perſwade us, that they are in ſuch a man who hath nothing but their counterfeits, yet the inward power and reality of them can never be found in any Hypocrite or Caſt-away. For, ſuch Perſons being not united to Chriſt the Head of his Church, cannot poſſibly have the truth of thoſe ſpiritual Graces which do neceſſarily require ſuch an union, as the root and fountain from whence they muſt flow.

The right underſtanding of this is of great uſe in Divinity, particularly for a true apprehenſion of our ſpiritual Eſtate and Condition; and therefore, before we proceed any farther, I ſhall endeavour to make it as plain as I can.

Now ſince Spiritual Beings, which are of a more abſtracted nature, are beſt known by reflecting upon things corporeal, we cannot find a more eaſie way to underſtand this Spiritual union, than by comparing it with the Union of the Body natural; with which indeed it hath no ſmall reſemblance.

Every good Christian hath a *twofold* Life, *Natural* and *Spiritual*. And as his natural Life is *twofold*. 1. *Substantialis*; the Soul it self. 2. *Accidentalis*; the real Effects and Operations of it: and in this sence it is, that when we see a man stretched out in a swouning fainting fit, without sense or motion, we usually say, The man is dead; though his immediate recovery doth convince us, that his Soul was still united to his Body: So likewise his *Spiritual* life is 1. *Substantialis*, and so the Spirit of Christ, or Christ himself (*who is our Life*, *Col.* 3. 4.) working in us by his Spirit, is our *vita Substantialis*, our essential Life; the first Principle of all our Graces and Operations. 2. *Accidentalis*, and so Faith and all other Spiritual Graces are call'd our Life.

As therefore in *Naturals*, unless the Soul be united to it, the Body neither stirs nor moves; neither sees, nor hears, nor walks, nor performs any other Operation either of sense or motion: so it is in *Spirituals*: unless the Soul be united to God and Christ, it neither lives the life of Grace here, nor shall live the life of Glory hereafter. By this time, I hope, you see the Reason why Hypocrites and Cast-

aways

aways ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven: becauſe, though they have a name to live, though they have many counterfeit Graces, proceeding from the Principles of moraliz'd reſtrained nature; yet they are dead: for want of this union they are no living members of Chriſt's Body, and therefore ſhall never reign with Chriſt as their Head.

And now as to the *Aſſumption*, viz. *That an outward Profeſſion may be found in Hypocrites and Caſt-aways, in ſuch men as ſhall never come to Heaven*; I cannot give you a more full either proof or illuſtration than the ſtories of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, particularly the *Phariſees*.

That they were a company of errand Hypocrites we have little cauſe to doubt, becauſe our *Bleſſed Saviour*, who knew their very Thoughts, calls them ſo even to their faces, and confutes them under that notion for a whole Chapter together, as you find it *Matth.* 23. *Woe unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites* is the burden of it.

That they were likewiſe *Reprobates* and *Caſt-aways*, we have great cauſe to think, not only from their obſtinate refuſal of the Meſſiah, *Have any of the Phariſees believed on him?* But alſo *John* 7. 48.

because Christ himself assures us; *Except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Such were these *Pharisees*, such Hypocrites, such Cast-aways. And yet if you consult their Character, you will find, they were as zealous Professors of Religion, as any can be nam'd, either in the Jewish or Christian State. It was no small part of their holiness, and whereby they begat an Opinion of Saintship, that they were a praying People; and often repair'd to God's house, as if they had been intimate friends of his, and had frequent Communion with him. They would extend their Prayers to a very great length, which is an Argument they were well pleas'd in the Duty.

Matth. 5.20.

I might tell you of their fasting twice a-week; their strict Observance of the Sabbath, with other instances, which I have not time to enlarge; only I must not omit to remind you, how precise they were in their Separations from other men: Out of a superstitious fear, it's likely, lest they should pollute themselves by a mixt Communion.

And

And yet these seeming Saints, as the Scripture tells us, were unnatural to their Parents; devour'd Widows houses, absolved men from their Oaths, were full of Extortion, ravening and wickedness, and derided the Sermons our Blessed Saviour made, because not sorted to their Covetous humour. He did not flatter them with stories of their Priviledges; no, they could do that well enough themselves; *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men*; but he tells them plainly and roundly of their damned Hypocrisie, and of the sad Consequences of it; from which all their mock-Devotion would not be able to secure them. *Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?* And this brings me naturally to the second Reason.

That an outward Profession of Religion (which these *Pharisees* had) without Obedience and amendment of Life (which they wanted) is displeasing and abominable in the sight of God, and therefore is not sufficient to bring us to Heaven. *R.* 2.

That *Sacrifices* and other *Ceremonial* Observances under the *Law*, were of Divine Institution is clear and express; they being usually deliver'd

deliver'd with this *Sanction*; That Soul that doth not thus or thus obſerve them, ſhall be cut off from *Iſrael*. And yet if you conſult the writings of the Prophets, you will there obſerve, that when theſe *Sacrifices* ſtood in competition with any moral Duty, they were ſo far from being accepted by Almighty God, that I find them rejected with the greateſt Deteſtation.

The Prophet *Iſaiah* is very full and pertinent to our purpoſe: read his *firſt Chapter* from the *Eleventh to the Twenty firſt Verſe*. I cannot ſtay to repeat the whole; you may do that at your leiſure.

To what purpoſe is the multitude of your Sacrifices? Bring no more vain oblations; your new Moons, and your appointed Feaſts my Soul hateth: when ye ſpread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when you make many Prayers I will not hear. And why all this abhorrence? *Your hands are full of Blood. Waſh you, make you clean, put away the evil of your Doings: ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well: ſeek judgment, relieve the Oppreſſed, judge the Fatherleſs, plead for the Widow.* To theſe you may add that noted place, *Hoſea 6. 6.* (which is likewiſe cited by our Saviour, *Matth.* 9. 13.) *I deſired*

Mercy

Mercy and not Sacrifice. The reason of all which is this: Because Sacrifices and such like performances were therefore instituted, that they might keep men from Sin, and the better encourage them to perform moral Duties.

Now that which *Sacrifices* were under the *Law*, that are Preaching, and Praying, and receiving the Sacraments under the Gospel: even Ordinances of Divine Institution, which are not to be observ'd for any intrinsick worth and value in themselves, but only *in ordine ad aliud*, for the better promotion of those two grand Fundamental Duties; *Piety* towards *God*, and *Charity* towards our *Neighbour*.

Wherefore is it that we *Pray* unto *God*? is it not to bewail, and beg pardon for our former neglect of these *Duties*; to implore Divine *Grace* and assistance, that we may perform them better for the future? in which endeavours if we are sincere, he will then assist us by his *Holy Spirit*, and grant our Petitions. *Whatsoever we ask we receive of him*, saith S. *John*. But why? not because our Prayers are many, or long, or loud, deliver'd with seeming vehemency and affectation of Spirit; but, *Because we keep his Commandments, and do those things*

that

that are pleasing in his sight, 1 John 3. 22.

So likewise for *Preaching*; Wherefore is it that you come to hear *Sermons*? is it only to entertain your selves with a continu'd well-compos'd Discourse concerning Divine matters? which perhaps you leave even at the Door of *Gods house*; and yet can have the confidence to boast of your attainments, and tell strange stories of your *Conversion*, and of your former days of Ignorance, from which you are now happily translated; because you have tasted the Heavenly gift, and are followers of the word.

I would not willingly be here mistaken. This is a captious Age, and we cannot be too cautious. I do not come to decry *Preaching*, or declaim against *Sermons*: it is the abuse of them I endeavour to remove. *Preaching* is necessary, and will be of continu'd use in the Church of *God*; it being a blessed Instrument, when enforced by the *Spirit*, to *open the eyes of the blind, to turn us from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God*. So that as long as there is *Ignorance* in mens *Understandings*, or *perverseness* in their *Wills*; that Apostolical Commission, which was intended for the continuance as well as first planting of the Gospel, will be still in force, *Go and teach all Nations*.

When

When you have well consider'd this, I hope you will more favourably receive those Reflections that follow.

I say it is not the regulated *use* of *Preaching* I inveigh against; it is this superstitious doating upon *Sermons* I would willingly rectifie. There is more of Popery in this practice, would their prejudice but allow me the Reflection; than the admired *Proselytes* of this fancy can easily apprehend. 'Tis no better, whoever considers it, than a perfect transcript of their *Opus operatum*. For, really these deluded People do talk at such a rate, were it pertinent to recite their Discourses, as if there were some secret *Charm* and hidden vertue, in this constant hearing and repeating of *Sermons*, whereby their Souls are secured and made impregnable, against the Policy of *Hell*, and the *Powers of Darkness*.

I cannot now stay to expostulate the Case with them; yet I must crave leave to express my wonder, that these People, who are thus inspir'd with such a zeal for *Sermons*, can yet be so cool and careless, so perfectly unconcern'd for the Sacrament of the *Lords Body*.

Certainly it is as much our Duty, there be-

ing as clear a Command for it as there is for *Preaching*; and the Condition of our Souls doth as much, nay more, require it (supposing a sound knowledge in Fundamentals) than it doth the hearing of Sermons. What is it therefore that makes this difference? True *Grace* in the Heart it cannot be; that, you know, is regular in its motions, and hath an equal respect to all Gods Commands; to one Duty as well as to another.

It must be acknowledg'd the infinite Patience and goodness of God, that after all our multiplied provocations, he is yet ready to embrace us in the Arms of Love, stretching out his hand all the day long; intreating us to accept of Peace and Pardon, which he is still ready to seal and confirm unto us in the *Sacrament* of his Blood.

And is this our requital of so glorious a Majesty, thus scornfully to reject such gracious Invitations? Do we thus consult our own happiness, by neglecting the means of it? Art thou sensible, O sinner, what it is thou dost, when thou turn'st thy back upon the Sacred Elements? If thou hast not lately consider'd it, I'le remind thee what it is.

When

When we preſent our ſelves before the *Lords Table*, we do humbly make confeſſion of our former breaches of his Covenant; we do earneſtly beg pardon for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*; the which pardon, with much joy and comfort, we expect to be now ſeal'd unto us by receiving the Sacred Elements: we do faithfully promiſe to live better lives for the future; and are now receiving ſtrength, Grace, and the aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit to make good our engagements.

So that in ſhort: When the Table of the Lord is ready furniſh'd, and theſe Spiritual Dainties provided for you, and yet you refuſe to Communicate; you do in effect thus reply to your Maker.

I am a Rebel and a Traytor, and notwithſtanding any Act of Pardon I will ſtand it out ſtill. I am filthy, and I will be filthy ſtill. I am *intemperate*, and I will be ſo ſtill. I am *luſtful* and *incontinent*, and I will be ſo ſtill. I am a *covetous*, *lying*, *deceitful* Perſon, and I will be ſo ſtill. I have abus'd *God's* holy Name, by *curſing* and *ſwearing*. I have profan'd his *Sabbaths* and his Sacraments, rejected the meane of *Grace*, and I will do ſo ſtill. I am

proud, cenſorious, envious, malicious, hypocritical, ſchiſmatical, and I will be ſo ſtill. I will caſt thy Counſel behind my Back. I will hate to be reformed.

Certainly theſe are ſad Reſolutions, and ſuch as will not eaſily be anſwer'd in another world, however men may think to avoid them in this. I know indeed there are ſeveral *Objections* wherein men may hope to ſecure themſelves. The careleſs ignorant Perſon will tell you he is unprepar'd; that he is fallen out with his Neighbour, and is not in *Charity*. There are others who ſcruple kneeling; are afraid of Pollution by a mixt Communion. Pitiful Fig-leaves theſe! eaſily blown away, did they not rather deſerve (eſpecially in this Place) a ſilent *Pity*, than a ſerious *Confutation*.

Now to *conclude* the whole with ſome practical Inferences.

Is an outward Profeſſion of Religion not ſufficient to bring us to *Heaven*? there is then,

Conviction. 1. *Conviction*, to all graceleſs prophane Perſons, who are ſo far from the *power* of Godlineſs, that they have not ſo much as the form of it. If the *Hypocrite* with all his *Prayers* and

his

his Sermons, and his zealous pretences for *Reformation* ſhall be thrown into *Hell*, where ſhall the open ſinner and ungodly appear? If many of thoſe that *Propheſie* in *Chriſt's* name, and in his Name have caſt out *Devils*, and in his Name have done many wonderful works, ſhall yet be ſent packing with that doleful Proteſtation; *Depart from me*; *I know you not ye workers of iniquity*: What may we then think of thoſe, that are ſo far from *Propheſying* in Chriſt's name, that it is their buſineſs by Oaths and execrations daily to blaſpheme it? Who are ſo far from caſting the Devil out of others, that they give him a kindly welcome in their own hearts; cheriſh and embrace all his wicked ſuggeſtions; and, as if they had ſworn Allegiance to this Prince of Darkneſs, by their ſinful allurements do ſolicite his cauſe and make Proſelytes for his Kingdom.

Secondly, here is *Direction* for the trial of our Spiritual Eſtate and Condition, even not to flatter our ſelves too much, or be too jolly upon it, though we find in our ſelves ſome ſhew of Godlineſs, ſome zeal in the performance of outward Duties. 2. *Direction.*

There's

There's no one part of practical Divinity of more comfortable *uſe*; nor indeed any, eſpecially of late years, more ſadly *abus'd*, than the Doctrine of Signs, Marks and Characters of a ſtate of Grace.

The great *Benefit* of this Doctrine (whatever is inſinuated to the contrary) is eaſily eſtabliſh'd by conſidering, That our *Souls* are more precious than either *Bodies* or *Eſtates*. As therefore, according to the Principles of right Reaſon, 'tis the practice of mankind, by the beſt methods we can, to ſecure theſe outward concernments; ſo doubtleſs 'tis as highly rational to get as good evidence, as the nature of the ſubject will permit, that our *Souls*, which are capable of the higheſt happineſs or extreameſt miſery, are in a ſecure Eſtate.

This *Truth*, though neceſſary in the *Doctrine*, is many times difficult and perplexing in the *practice*. For though I do little doubt, but by the mercy of God aſſurance of Salvation is attainable in this life, and that without extraordinary Revelation, at leaſtwiſe in ſuch meaſure and degree as may ſuſtain the Soul of an honeſt Chriſtian with comfort, and ſecure him from deſpair; yet I do not think it either ſo abſolutely

lutely neceſſary, or ſo free from fears and doubtings, as ſome perhaps have imagin'd.

For, even ſuppoſing it to be true, which yet ſome are pleas'd to diſpute, that he who is ingrafted into Chriſt by a lively Faith, and ſo is made a living branch of the true Vine, *ſhall bring forth fruit, and his fruit ſhall remain*; ſhall be acted by his Grace here, and reign with him in Glory hereafter: yet ſince this *Union* betwixt Chriſt and the Soul, however *indiſſoluble*, is yet *myſtical* and inviſible; and can no otherwiſe be prov'd than *à poſteriori*, from thoſe *Graces* of his Spirit that flow from it: and ſince theſe Graces, even ſuppoſing them to be *true* and ſincere (and there are many counterfeits) are yet but imperfect in this life; and conſequently the *truth* and ſincerity of them is not always ſo manifeſt, but that a man may be ſometimes deceiv'd in his judgment concerning the ſame: It hence unavoidably follows, what betwixt the *one* and the *other*, (the imperfection of the *thing*, and the difficulty of *judging*) that the *Aſſurance* which is wholly grounded thereupon, and can therefore have no more ſtrength than they can give it, muſt needs be ſubject to fears, jealouſies and doubtings.

It

It is not therefore to be wonder'd, that a *Doctrine* thus difficult and obſcure, ſhould, through the Devils ſubtilty, and the deceitfulneſs of our own hearts, be deprav'd and abus'd. The which abuſe is twofold, in *Theſi*, and in *Hypotheſi*. In *Theſi*, by collecting falſe Signs and Characters of a ſtate of Grace. In *Hypotheſi*, by a falſe application of thoſe that are true. The former is uſually the fault of our *Preachers*, the latter of the *People*.

The complaint would certainly be juſt (if the Digreſſion were not too large) ſhould I here occaſionally diſcover, what unſound Caſuiſts, Phyſicians of no value, ſome of our late Reforming Divines have ſhew'd themſelves to be: Much of whoſe Temporizing Divinity, as may eaſily appear to him that ſhall take the pains to examine it, was evidently calculated for the *Meridian* of their own *Party*. One eminent inſtance whereof, is the ſubject now before us: In oppoſition to which, and to prevent miſtakes, I will give you this Concluſion: *That cannot be an infallible Mark of true Grace, which may be found in an unregenerate and graceleſs Perſon*: It being, you know, inconſiſtent with a *Propriety* to be attributed to any but its own ſubject.

ject. Hence I infer (which is full and close to our purpose) that to be a constant hearer of *Sermons*, or to be able by the help of good natural parts to pray *extempore*, are no such infallible Signs as some Persons have fanci'd, since according to their own Writers, if they dare believe themselves, they are both of them consistent with an unregenerate state.

Dost thou therefore hear the Word of God with joy? Dost thou pray frequently, and that with fervor and earnestness? Dost thou avoid grosser Sins with care? Dost thou oppose against common Corruption with zeal? These are indeed thy Duty, and thou art to be commended for them; these are comfortable Signs, but yet no certain and infallible evidences of Grace. For what is there in all this, that an Hypocrite either hath not or might not do: as the instances of *Saul*, *Ahab*, *Jehu*, *Herod*, with several others do evidently prove?

But here it may be demanded (and it is a very profitable enquiry) That since the Hypocrite may go thus far in the performance of Religious Duties, how shall I be able to discern, whether my Duties be sincere or hypocritical;

critical; such as do proceed from a Principle of true *Grace*, which God will accept; or else from a Principle of mere *nature*, which shall certainly be rejected?

I dare not now engage to give you a clear and satisfactory Resolution to this difficult Question: a distinct methodical explication of so high a Point, is very unsuitable for the Close of a Sermon. But since it falls so naturally in my way, that I cannot fairly avoid it: I shall endeavour to prescribe some short, yet, I hope, sound Direction what to do in this matter.

When we discourse about holy Duties, there is one thing can never be found in the Hypocrite; and therefore by the Rule of contraries 'tis a good mark of sincerity.

'Tis the *Universality* of our Duties and Graces, when we have an equal respect to all Gods Commandments.

Art thou therefore solicitous about thy eternal Estate (as every good Christian ought to be?) Art thou desirous to be instructed, whether thy Duties are perform'd in sincerity, yea or no? then consider the *Universality* of them.

'Tis

'Tis a Rule amongst Physicians, *Universalia salutaria, partialia ex morbo*; If Heat and Cold be moderate and constant, equally diffus'd over all the Body, 'tis a good Sign of health: but if a man be hot in one part, and cold in another; if the palms of his Hands burn, and the soles of his Feet be cold, 'tis a shrew'd sign that all is not right, but that some Disease is either bred or in breeding.

And thus it is in *Spirituals*.

Art thou brisk and forward in some Duties, but as cool and careless in others? Dost thou keep a noise and clamor about *Preaching* and *Praying*, and in the interim canst allow thy self to live in a constant neglect of the Sacrament of the *Lords Supper*? Art thou earnest, nay, even boysterous in *Prayer*, whilest in publick, and with the society of others; and yet canst be as dead, as cool and as formal when in private, none being present but God and thine own Soul; none to admire thy zeal, none to take notice of thy eminent improvements? Art thou a mighty stickler for *Preaching*, a great promoter and encourager of *Sermons*? Dost thou even breath after a soul-searching, a sin-reproving Ministery? Art thou wondrous

forward to hear other men told of their faults; and yet art angry and impatient to be reminded of thine own? Art thou enrag'd when the right string is touch'd, when thy sweet beloved Sin is smartly reprov'd? Canst thou then say or think, that the Preacher might have chose a fitter Text, or have handled it more prudently, or the like? One instance more. Doth thy blood even rise when thou heareſt another man swear an Oath; and yet canst thou be contented at the same time to lie, equivocate and cheat; to impose upon thy poor innocent Brother, who hath more Charity for thee than to think, that a man who makes such a glorious Profession as thou dost, can so conscientiously cozen him?

If it be *thus*, and *thus*, and *thus* with thee, look to thy self, thou art an arrant *Hypocrite*, and, without a serious *Repentance*, art in a wretched Condition. To Conclude.

If thou repenteſt of one Sin, and yet perſiſteſt in another: If thou obeyeſt one Commandment, and yet breakeſt another: If thou art zealous in one point, and cool in another: If thou hateſt one vice, but loveſt another; flatter not thy self too much; thou haſt

reason

reason to suspect all is not well within.

But on the contrary, if thy Repentance, thy Obedience, thy performance of Duties, thy Zeal, thy hatred of Sin, and other Graces be universal; equally bent upon all Good; equally set against all Evil: it is a good Sign of the truth of Grace, and that thou art no Hypocrite but a Child of God.

FINIS.